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ABSTRACT

National Project II: Alternative to the Revolving Door is a project designed to evaluate and refine existing programs for low-achievers. Under sponsorship of the Fund for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education, the project was opened to postsecondary institutions throughout the country which felt they were doing a commendable job of meeting the needs of disadvantaged students. Of the 225 institutions applying to the Fund under the program, only ten were selected as having developed an exemplary open door program. The selected institutions included four two-year colleges: Bronx Community College (Bronx, N. Y.), Oscar-Rose Community College (Midwest City, Oklahoma), Southeastern Community College (Whiteville, N. C.), and Staten Island Community College (Staten Island, N. Y.). This report describes the exemplary programs at these four two-year colleges. It reports on the kinds of remediation courses offered, the administrative organization of the program, the enrollment capabilities, methods of staffing, sources of funding, and the evidences of program success. (DC)

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MINORITY PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ALTERNATIVES TO THE REVOLVING DOOR*

Headlines in many major newspapers throughout the country indicate that colleges and universities are pressed by student deficiencies to the extent that it is necessary to provide remedial work in a manner that is placing an unusual financial burden on them at a time when their budgets are being drastically cut.

Plagued by increasing numbers of students who are unable to write coherent sentences, read even at the eighth grade level or handle simple arithmetic, colleges and universities are faced with the problem of providing remedial work in such basic skills.

Only a few institutions, including some of the most prestigious, have been able to escape the problem. Mounting alarm among college officials have produced growing efforts to deal with student deficiencies at great budgetary difficulties and considerable disagreement over how to label remedial courses and whether credit should be given for them.

Both the magnitude of the demands and the cost of remediation are so great that the regular college programs are jeopardized in many institutions because of a drain on the total college budget. For example, 49,934 student Ohio State University--already operating 350 sections of freshman English at a cost of $500,000--is trying to juggle the budget to

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*A Presentation by Dr. James A. Colston, President-Emeritus, Bronx Community College of the City University of New York at the Annual Meeting of AACJC in Washington, D.C., March 19, 1976.

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pay for remedial work it wants to begin in the fall. The City University of New York with an enrollment of over 250,000 has run the country's largest remedial program since adopting an Open Admissions Policy in 1970--spending more than $40 million a year on its remedial program. City College, one of the units in City University, is offering 29,875 hours of classtime a semester in remedial work; compared with 2,262 hours in 1969, prior to Open Admissions. Thousands of other institutions are involved in remedial programs with comparable strains on their educational ingenuity as well as their budgets.

A program designed to meet the needs of the educationally and economically deficient student most worthy of our consideration today is National Project II: Alternatives to the Revolving Door sponsored by the Fund for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education--Dr. Virginia B. Smith, Director.

This new and unusual project aims at evaluating and refining programs for students who enter college as low achievers; students who have traditionally been discouraged from pursuing postsecondary education. The project was opened to postsecondary institutions throughout the country who felt they were doing a commendable job of meeting the needs of disadvantaged students. Two hundred and twenty five institutions applied to the Fund under this program. Ten institutions were selected as having developed an exemplary Open Door program. Bronx Community College was selected from the ten as the Resource Institution.

During the past decade American postsecondary education has noticeably widened its vision and broadened its commitment to extend opportunity to

people whose educational needs and ambitions were previously neglected. Among the new students served by this broadened commitment are many who have been defined by their previous educational experiences as low achievers.

Colleges welcoming these students have had to rethink their course offerings, curricula, and support services. While the programs differ in design and technique, each program directs substantial resources to provide a high level of personalized attention to the students. Since, for most of the colleges participating in the program, the direction or scope of their programs represent an initial effort, particular attention has been paid to evaluating the program's impact on students, devising means of measuring this impact, and disseminating the findings to a world not always familiar with or sympathetic to open door education.

The ten institutions selected as Associates in this national project are:

1. Bronx Community College, Bronx, N.Y.
2. California State University, Fullerton, California
3. Institute for Services to Education, Washington, D.C.
4. Malcolm-King: Harlem College Extension, New York City
5. Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
6. Oscar-Rose Community College, Midwest City, Oklahoma
7. Saint Edward's University, Austin, Texas
8. Southeastern Community College, Whiteville, North Carolina
9. Staten Island Community College, Staten Island, N.Y.
10. University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

Although these ten colleges were selected as Associates, they realize that many colleges throughout the country not listed here have tailored programs responsive to the needs of low achieving students from their region and that they are continuously revising their programs to make them as responsive as possible. These institutions represent only a part of this national movement.

Programs of four of the participating colleges:

1. Bronx Community College - Public, A.A. Degree, 13,800 students

   Program: Open Admissions

   The ethnic composition of the student body is Black 45%; Puerto Rican 19%; White 28%; Other 8%.

   Placement Tests in reading, writing, and math are administered to all entering freshmen.

   The college offered 11 non-credit remediation courses - Chemistry, English Composition (2 courses); Reading (2 courses); English as a second language; Mathemathics (3 courses); Physics and Speech. All are non-credit, one semester preparatory courses ranging from three to five hours of class time per week. They are designed to enable the student to master the basic skills and certain content that enable the student to cope with college level work. The remediation program of the college is administered primarily by individual departments. The departments most heavily involved are English, Mathematics, and Special Educational Services (Reading, Study Skills, and English as a Second Language). Staffing for remediation courses varies. Some departments have recruited faculty with specific expertise in remediation while others have utilized (and sometimes retrained) existing faculty. Most departments have done both.

   In 1972, a special appropriation in the amount of $400,000 was made to the college by the City University for remediation purposes. This amount became a part of the base budget to provide administrative, research, and evaluative services; tutorial programs, software development and equipment purchase; computer assisted instruction and departmental and interdepartmental projects.

Evidence of program success was measured in terms of

a) Graduation and retention rates

b) Measures of student satisfaction with the college program and its objectives

2. Oscar Rose Junior College - Public, A.A. Degree, 7,500 students

Program: Special Upward Bound Program For Veterans

HEW's Talent Search/Upward Bound Program

Project includes basic studies courses taught to 200 veterans by a success oriented educational team to build those basic educational skills from which success in postsecondary education could be achieved.

The basic studies courses include Psychology of Personal Adjustment, Developmental Reading, Basic English Composition and Basic Mathematics. Personal Counseling and tutoring, strengthened by a "Tutor Training Packet" are also components of the project.

All students typically enroll during their first semester in a counselor taught course, Psychology of Personal Adjustment. A unit on college orientation including study habits and skills is included in this course. During this unit, the counselor's initial interview is reinforced; emphasis on the availability of assistance with writing skills through the open-writing lab, assistance in reading through the open-reading lab and overall assistance through tutorial services.

3. Southeastern Community College - Public, A.A. Degree, 1,666 students

Program: Resources for Student Learning Program

This program is a drastic departure from the traditional educational programs offered in other institutions of higher education in 1969. As a consortium member of the Regional Education Laboratory of the Carolinas and Virginia, the focus of the college was directed to methods of improving instruction for low achieving students. The overall goals were:

a) To train faculty members to convert their courses to provide individualized, multi-media, self-paced learning experiences, with immediate student feedback for reinforcement of learning; and

b) To promote research-based decision making to improve curricula and instruction.

The programs overall design and procedures are based upon a set of working principles or assumptions about the nature of the learning process and the needs of students in this social context:

a) Places student at Center of Learning Process. . . .

b) Recognizes and responds to individual differences in skills, values, learning styles by utilizing highly flexible curriculum design permitting learning at different rates and in different ways.

c) The staff relates to students with openness and respect. . . . . .

d) Program experiences provide students with successes and predominantly positive feedback. . .

e) The curriculum is experiential and process-oriented. Learning activities actively involve the student in hands-on activities and experiences. The classroom becomes an extension of the community and the community an extension of the classroom; both are living/learning environments.

f) Learning activities provide interdisciplinary core experiences that integrate the program's various components.

g) A counseling and teaching approach that requires the student to take responsibility for his own behavior is used by all instructors and counselors.

The population mix of students who volunteer for program is 50% Black, 40% White, and 10% Indian.

4. Staten Island Community College - Public, A.A. Degree Granting, 10,000 students.

Program: People Center

A City University of New York institution actively engaged in Open Admissions since the Fall of 1970. The college launched efforts, not only in the area of skill remediation, but also, of equal importance, in the area of Counseling which is far more extensive than in other CUNY colleges.

The Center serves at any given time from 450 to 500 students who are not too different from other Open Admissions students except that their low self-image and poor performance expectancies are more pronounced.

The center program is both practical and measurable in that its goals are clear cut: to help Open Admissions students to achieve higher grades and to lower the drop-out rate by dealing with self-image and performance expectancies.

Programmatic features include:

a) Counselor student ratio is 1:60.

b) Counselors are held accountable for the academic attrition rates of their clients.

c) Each student must be seen twice a month by counselor.

d) Each student must be called twice a month by counselor.

e) All of the students teachers must be contacted by the counselor on a regular basis. The counselor and teacher must collaborate in identifying problems and devising solutions on an individual basis.

f) A monthly report of both a quantitative and qualitative nature is written for each student by the counselor.

g) The program duration is essentially the student's freshman year. Counselor works out with the student an educational and career plan--signed

by a counselor and student. The plan intends to provide the student with a feeling of security and clarity of goals.

h) Each counselor employs one or two peer counselors (former students in the program) to aid with the work.

Evidence of Success:

a) Evidence shows through evaluations that the People Center is meeting its stated objectives: increasing retention rates and improving the grade point average of students in the program.

b) The program is strongly supported by the students in the program, by the faculty, by the counselors and by the peer counselors.

c) Students see the program and their counselors as being warm, friendly, available, helpful and of significant help to them in solving personal problems and in navigating through the bureaucracy of higher education.

d) The People Center is one of the most successful counseling programs the McManis Associates, Inc., Project Director, has ever seen. Dr. L. James Harvey, the Project Director, has traveled from coast to coast assessing counseling and student personnel programs in two year colleges since 1960.

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